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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES

New Wait Times Data Shows Double-Digit Drops in the North East Area

TORONTO – New data shows the Ontario government's Wait Time Strategy is resulting in decreases in wait times for key health services in the North East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) area, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Trends in the North East LHIN area are encouraging with significant decreases in wait times for a number of key health services," Smitherman said. "Through the leadership and hard work of thousands of front line health professionals, the Wait Time Strategy is clearly achieving real results for patients by improving access to care, closer to home."

As a result of the government's Wait Time Strategy, wait times in which nine out of 10 patients have completed their surgery or have had their exam in the North East LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 54.4 per cent for cataract surgery (148 days)
- 46.4 per cent for angiography (27 days)
- 43.0 per cent for CT scans (43 days)
- 40.7 per cent for knee replacement (280 days).

Wait times for other key health services have also declined by:

- 11.2 per cent for angioplasty (two days).

Cardiac bypass surgery and cancer surgery are also below the access target set by the government in December 2005.

At the same time, Smitherman acknowledged two health service areas that remain a challenge – there has been a 51.5 per cent increase in wait times for hip replacement and a 70.4 per cent increase in wait times for MRI scans since August/September 2005.

"We continue to make significant investments in hip replacements and MRI scans and we expect to see improvements in wait times in these areas," Smitherman said.

Since the launch of the Wait Time Strategy, the Ontario government has invested $27,124,305 for additional procedures in hospitals in the North East LHIN area, including:

- 4230 cataract surgeries ($3,172,600)
- 8,612 cardiac procedures ($7,632,361)
- 961 hip and knee joint replacements ($7,104,986)

- 598 cancer surgeries ($3,229,078)
- 14,792 hours, 22,188 exams MRI ($4,992,580)
- 3,970 hours, 13,895 exams CT ($992,700).

The new wait time data is available at www.ontariowaittimes.com, which is closing in on nearly 4 million hits as of today.

"Reduced wait times is one of seven priorities outlined in our Integrated Health Services Plan (2006-2009) and these numbers tell us loudly and clearly, where we need to focus our energies to bring about positive change," said Rémy Beaudoin, CEO of the North East LHIN. "We will continue to work with the region's hospitals and the newly established Regional Wait Times Advisory Panel, in order to reverse those areas of health care procedures that are witnessing either increased or unchanged wait times."

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait time and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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